



Plan of Action for Regional Transit

Northeastern Illinois

Transit system accessibility

Draft as of 8/1/2023



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning



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Transit system accessibility

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Recommendations (summary)

Continue work toward full ADA accessibility

- Complete a regional detailed plan and timeline for full transit system accessibility, building on efforts like CTA's ASAP program
- Identify and plan for improvements to off-system accessibility on facilities not controlled by transit providers (e.g., sidewalks, curb ramps)
- Invest state funds to leverage federal grant opportunities for both on- and off-system accessibility

Leverage technology to improve the system's ease of use

- Develop stronger two-way communication tools with riders (e.g., real-time information, accessibility challenges, open data sharing)
- Fund investments in accessible wayfinding, signage, and real-time information sharing

- Service frequency
- Cleanliness of system assets
- Staff presence and two-way rider communication





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**Our challenge:
Many regional
travelers cannot
access public
transit because of
physical, visual,
technological, or
other barriers.**



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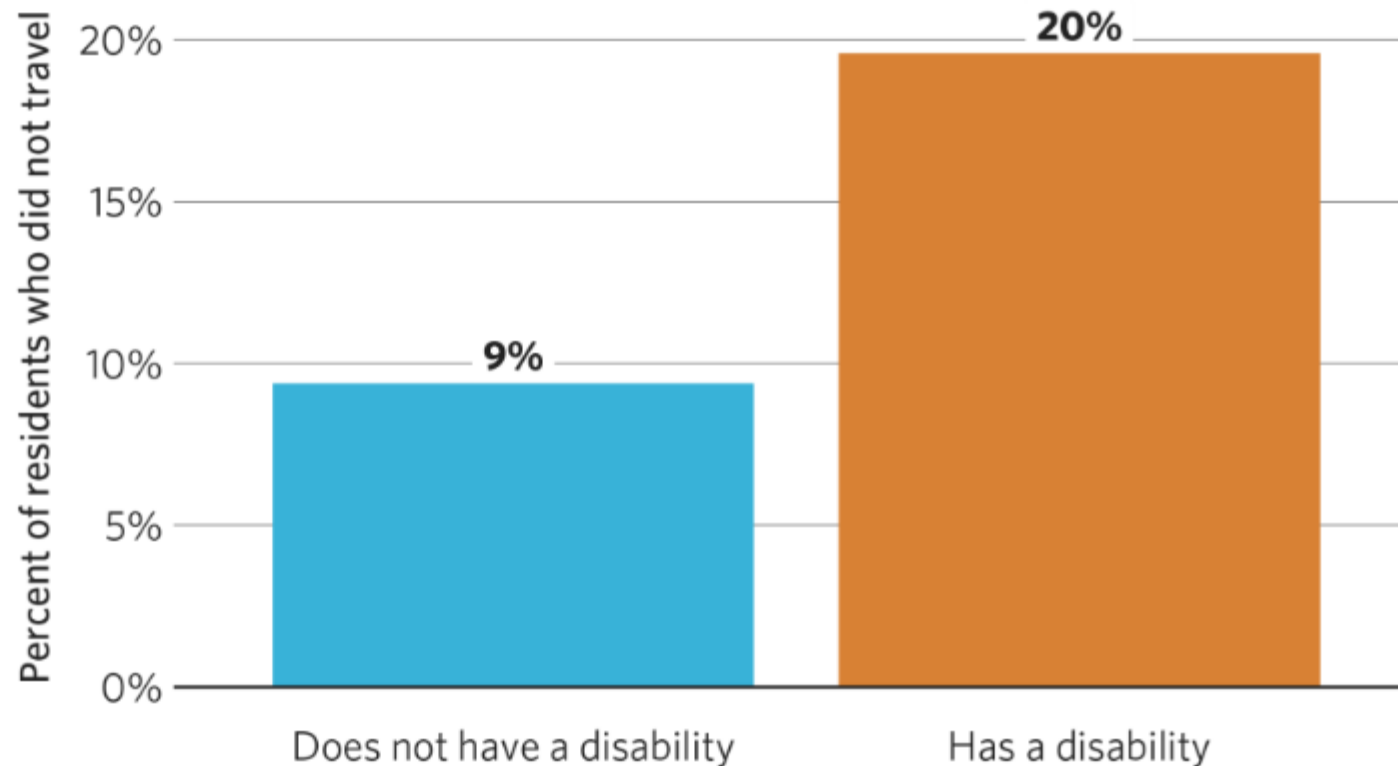
Ability status has a large impact on residents' travel patterns

Residents with disabilities were less likely to travel than were others in the region.

Note: Includes trips by residents age 16 and older of the CMAP seven-county region, Grundy, and DeKalb.

Sample size:
- Without disability (22,785);
- With disability (1,286).

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning analysis of My Daily Travel data.



Accessibility to travelers with different abilities



Background

- In the 1980s, the disability community pushed for accessible fixed route public transportation, including in Chicago.
- Public attention, protests, and lawsuits led to significant advancements in accessibility.





The *Americans with Disabilities Act* requires transportation providers – including Metra, Pace, and CTA – to serve travelers of different abilities

Public Law 101-336
101st Congress

An Act

To establish a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability.

July 26, 1990
[S. 933]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. Findings and purposes.
Sec. 3. Definitions.

TITLE I—EMPLOYMENT

Sec. 101. Definitions.
Sec. 102. Discrimination.
Sec. 103. Defenses.
Sec. 104. Illegal use of drugs and alcohol.
Sec. 105. Posting notices.
Sec. 106. Regulations.
Sec. 107. Enforcement.
Sec. 108. Effective date.

TITLE II—PUBLIC SERVICES

Subtitle A—Prohibition Against Discrimination and Other Generally Applicable Provisions

Sec. 201. Definition.
Sec. 202. Discrimination.
Sec. 203. Enforcement.
Sec. 204. Regulations.
Sec. 205. Effective date.

Subtitle B—Actions Applicable to Public Transportation Provided by Public Entities Considered Discriminatory

PART I—PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER THAN BY AIRCRAFT OR CERTAIN RAIL OPERATIONS

Sec. 221. Definitions.
Sec. 222. Public entities operating fixed route systems.
Sec. 223. Paratransit as a complement to fixed route service.
Sec. 224. Public entity operating a demand responsive system.
Sec. 225. Temporary relief where lifts are unavailable.
Sec. 226. New facilities.
Sec. 227. Alterations of existing facilities.
Sec. 228. Public transportation programs and activities in existing facilities and one car per train rule.
Sec. 229. Regulations.
Sec. 230. Interim accessibility requirements.
Sec. 231. Effective date.

Americans with
Disabilities Act
of 1990.

42 USC 12101
note.

ADA requirements



The ADA established transportation regulations under Title II, including:

- All new buses purchased must have lifts/ramps and stop announcements
- Established paratransit for people unable to ride fixed route
 - Service within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of fixed route service
 - Same days and hours of fixed routes
 - Fares no more than 2X of fixed route
- Required “key stations” for legacy rail stations built after 1990 to be accessible


**The federal
government has
recently provided
funding to
accelerate these
investments...**

TRANSPORTATION

CTA, Metra to get \$185 million in federal funding to make stations more accessible

By Alice Yin
Chicago Tribune
Dec 19, 2022 at 5:00 am



 Expand



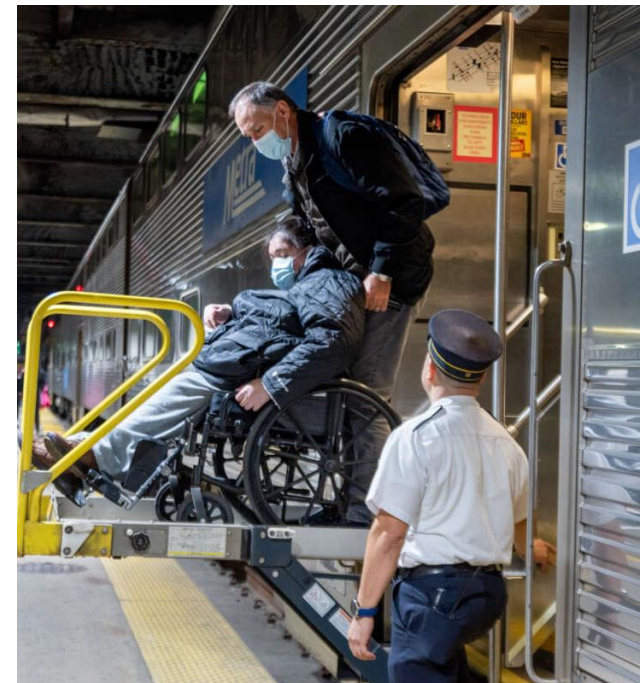


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**...but while regional
transit agencies
have improved
accessibility...**

**100% of CTA and Pace buses
are accessible**

**100% of Metra and CTA's rail
cars are accessible**



...significant gaps remain

29% of CTA rail stations are not accessible

24% of Metra rail stations are either partially or fully not accessible

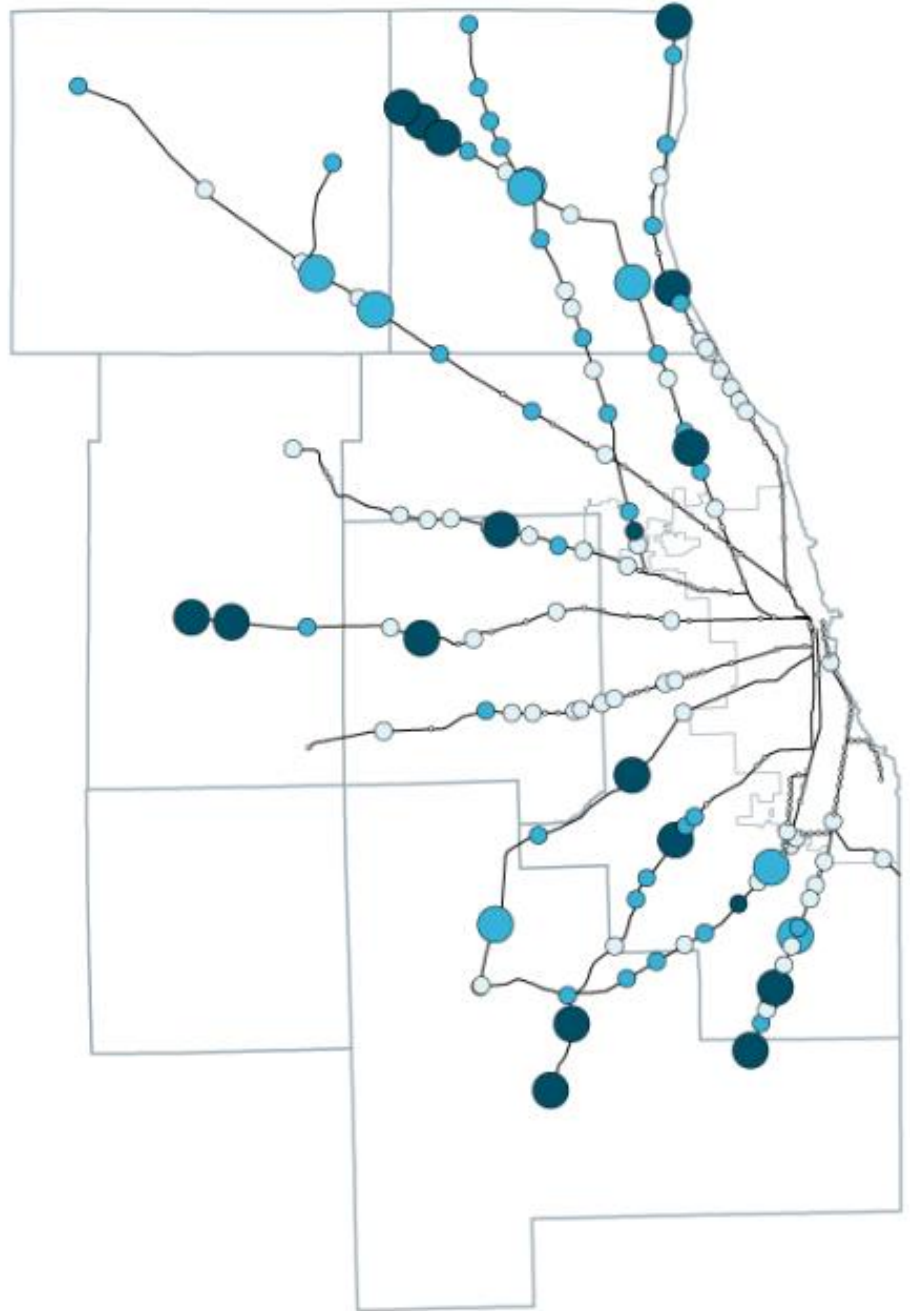
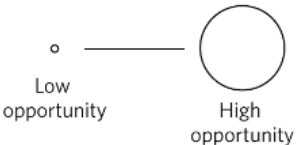
Many transit stations and stops lack crucial sidewalk connections

Sidewalk investment opportunities near Metra stations based on population and employment density

Percent of streets with missing sidewalks

- Less than 25%
- Between 25-50%
- More than 50%

Opportunity to invest in sidewalks relative to area population and employment



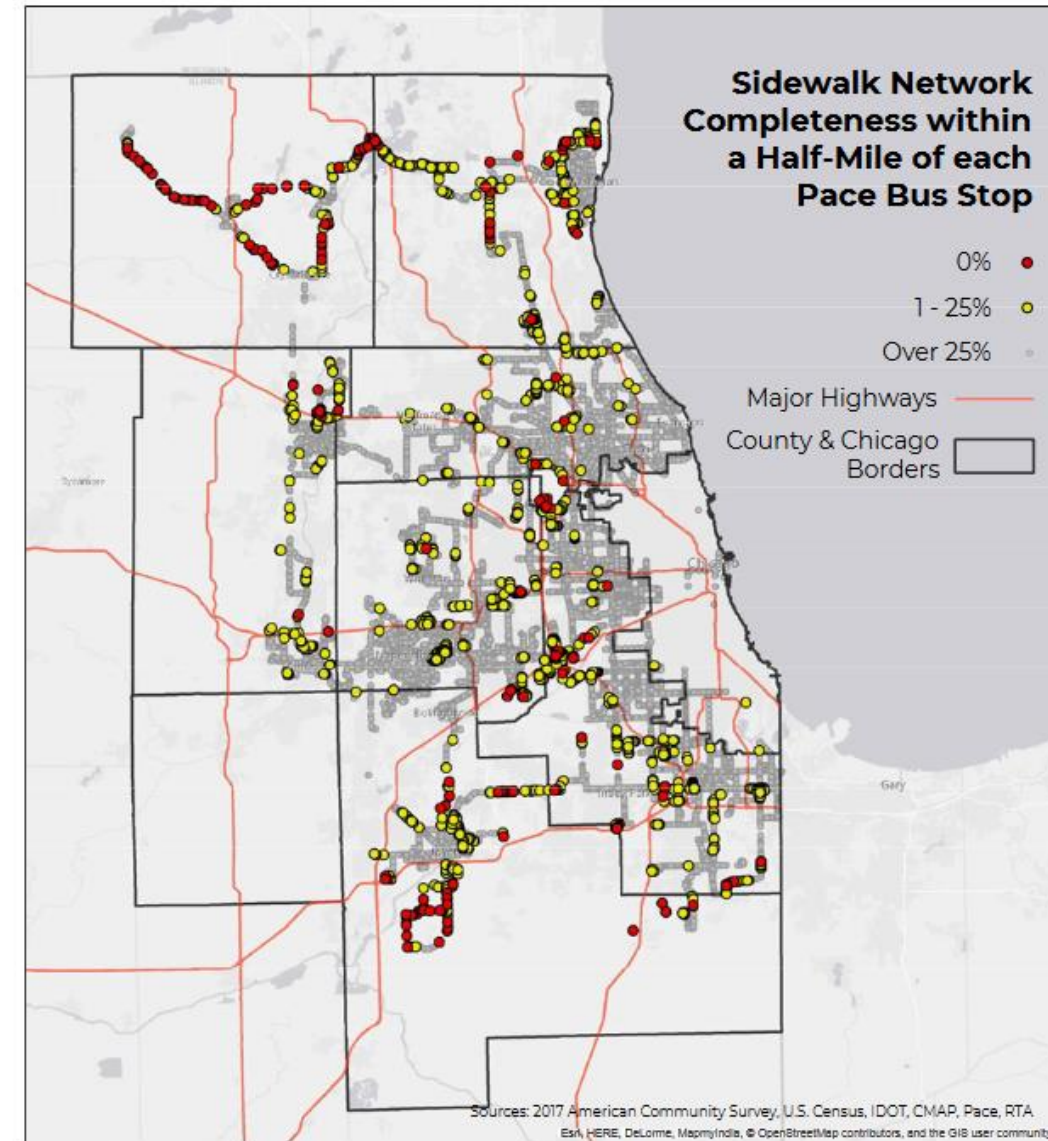
Many transit stations and stops lack crucial sidewalk connections



Image source: Google Maps

Map source: Metropolitan Planning Council

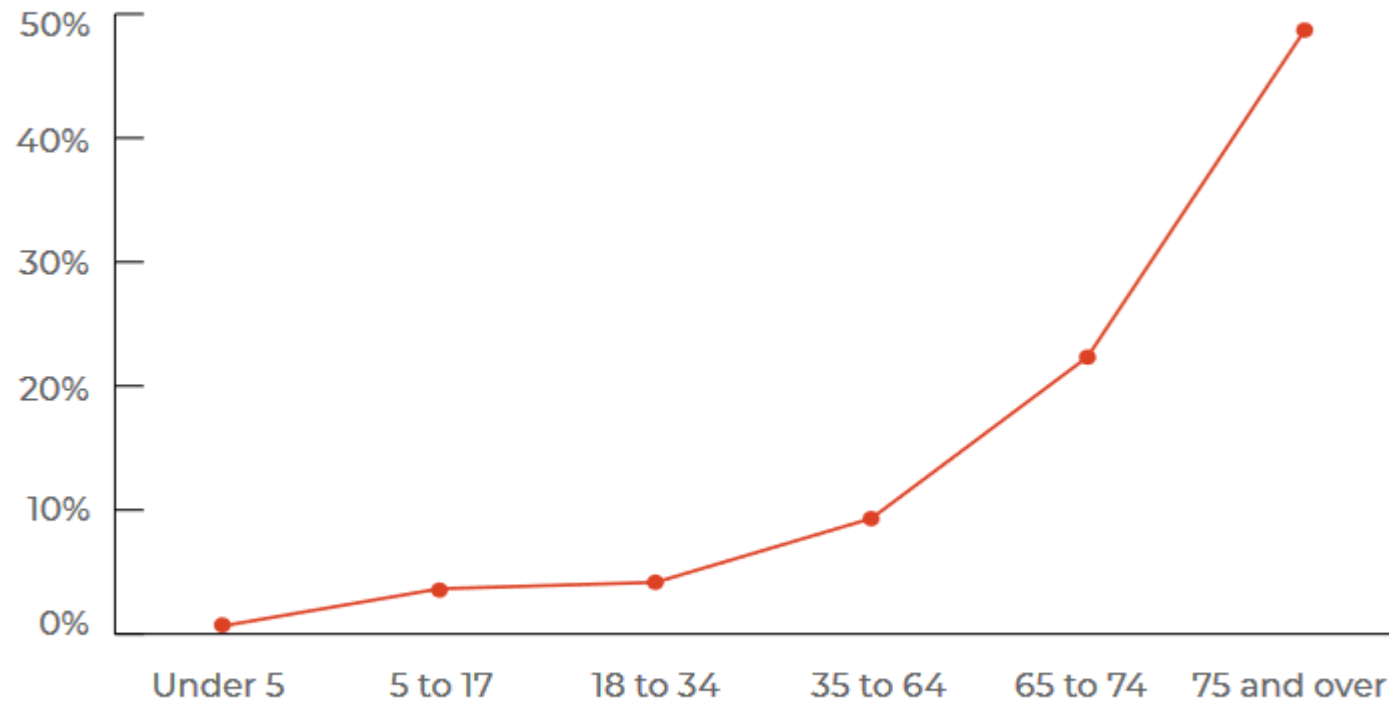
Figure 8. Sidewalk Network Completeness Near Pace Bus Stops



Note: 100% completeness means there are sidewalks on both sides of all streets radiating from a specific bus stop for the specified distance (either ½ or ¼ mile). A bus stop with sidewalks on only one side of all streets radiating from it would have a sidewalk completeness of 50%.

A significant and growing share of regional residents face mobility challenges

Figure 1. Prevalence of Disability in the Chicago Region, 2017



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimate, 2013-2017. Data for Cook, Lake, DuPage, Kane, McHenry and Will Counties.

Source: Metropolitan Planning Council

We can build on current work

CMAP's American with Disabilities Act (ADA) program

- Educate communities about the law and its requirements
- Support municipalities in self-evaluating and completing ADA transition plans
- Encourage communities to implement and fund infrastructure improvements

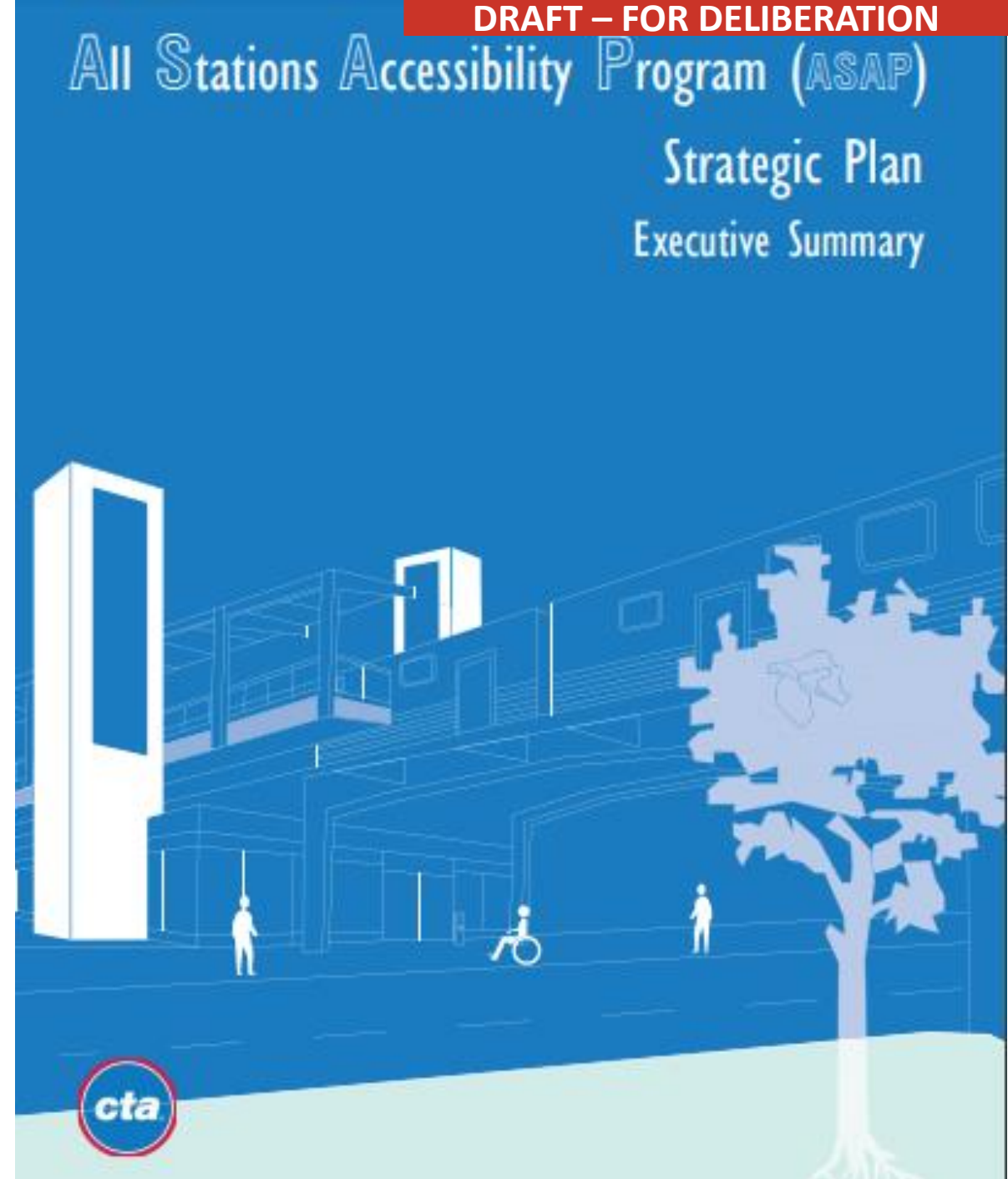


CMAP-led ADA training session, 2022



Example: CTA actions

- **All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP)** identifies and prioritizes remaining inaccessible rail stations
- Proactively **rehabilitate or replace** existing elevators
- **Improvements in wayfinding, tactile treatments, and audible/nonvisual signaling**



Technological accessibility and usability

Informational barriers

People with visual or hearing impairments may not be able to access information related to public transportation - non-existent or inaccessible signage and wayfinding

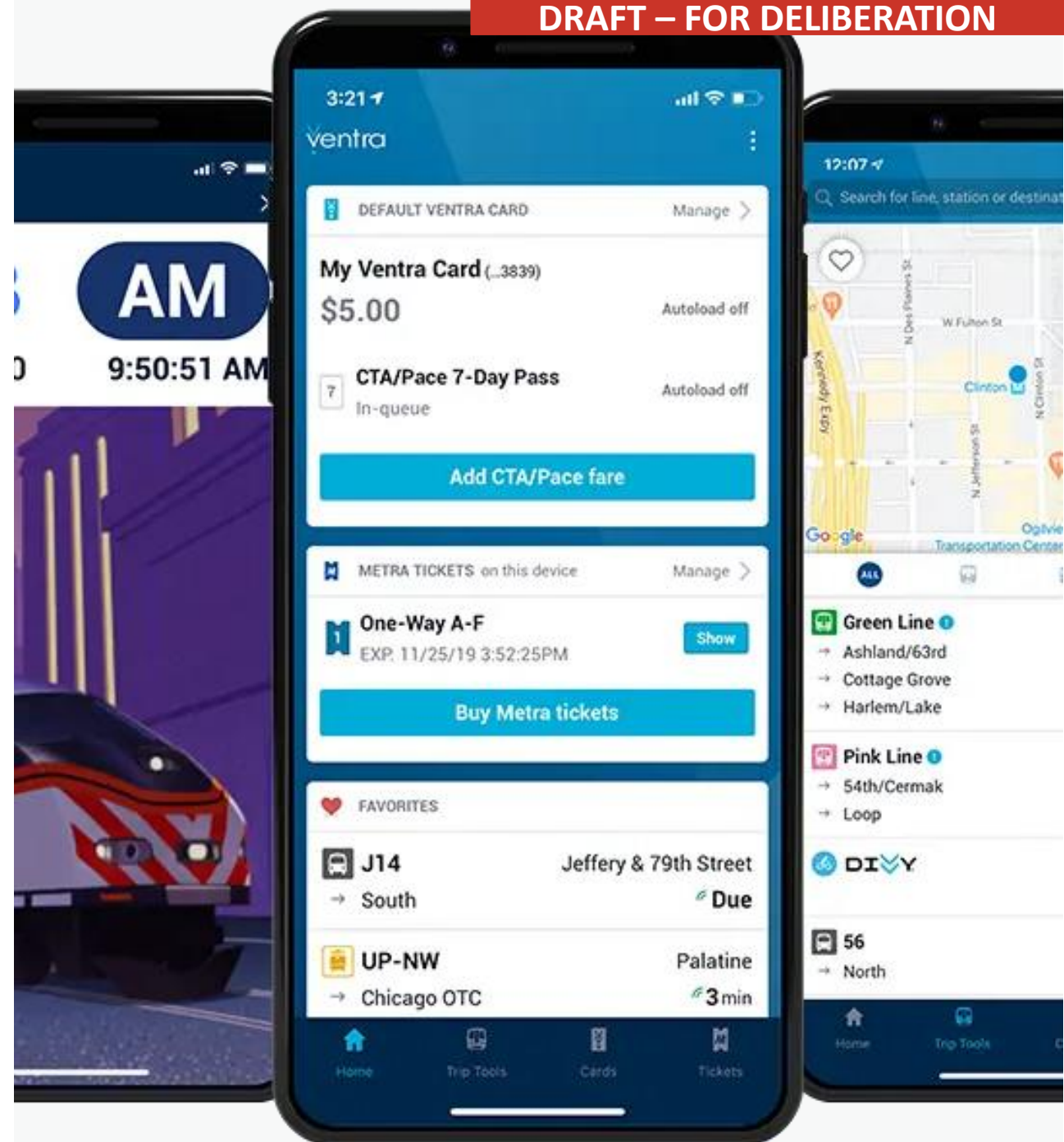




Technological barriers

Issues include:

- Inconsistent fare payment systems
- Some systems rely on/benefit from smartphone access
- Real-time information accuracy and availability

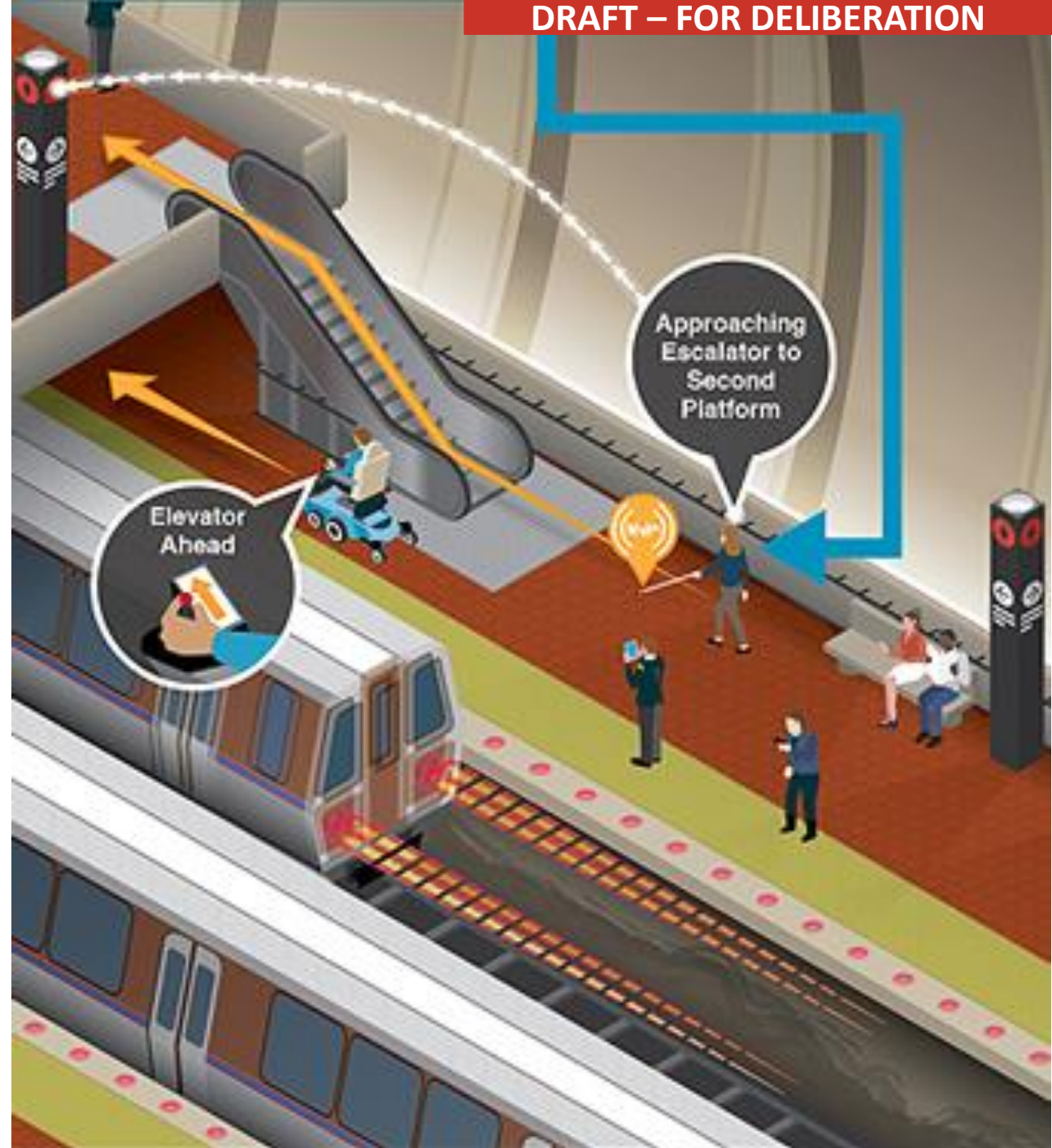
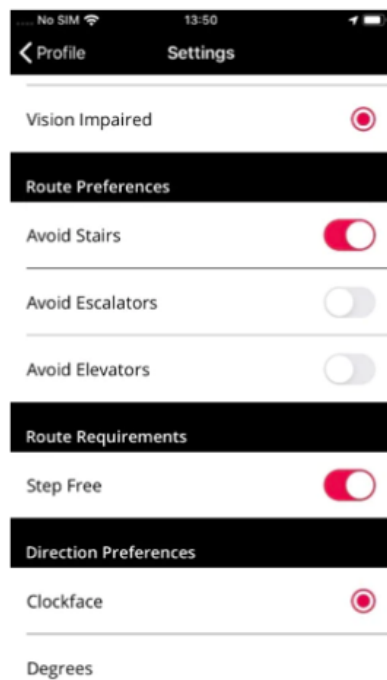
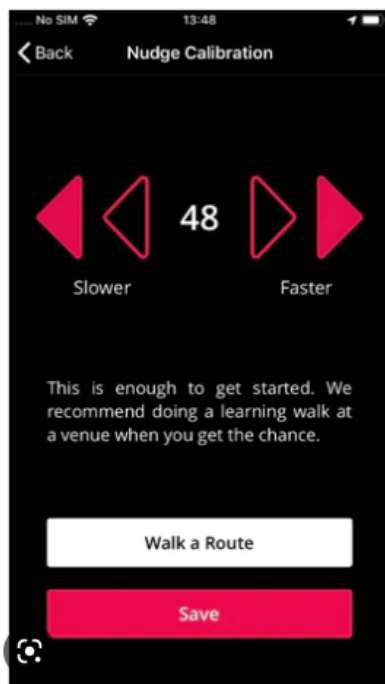


Wayfinding and two-way communication

- “Help point” to provide easier communication with simple, large buttons for ease of use
- Accessibility signage and wayfinding
- Large lettering and braille
- Solar-powered bus displays



Audio-based navigation



Recap: A menu of options

Addressing physical accessibility on the system

- Complete a regional detailed plan and timeline for full transit system accessibility (building on CTA's ASAP program and other system efforts)
- Allocate dedicated state funds to advance and leverage federal investments in on-system accessibility

Addressing accessibility when getting to or from the system

- Require inclusion of transit station area accessibility in comprehensive planning (with a relatively broad geographic footprint)
- State funding for off-system (sidewalk connections, curb ramps) transit accessibility priorities

Technological accessibility and usability

- Fund investments in accessible wayfinding and signage (digital, Braille, audio, etc.) through public investments and collaborations with private/nonprofit partners
- Develop more user-friendly interfaces/apps to gather customer feedback on accessibility problems in the transportation system (e.g., uneven platforms, elevator issues)

Strategies that cut across PART topics

- Fare policy and payment methods
- Safety and security (including staff within the stations)
- Land use near transit
- Service frequency